

## **Hurricane Response Incident Command Post, Metairie, La.**

*A Unified Command addressing environmental issues*

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# **News Release**

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## **Environmental Response Unified Command to Continue in 2006**

**Metairie, La.** – Personnel from the multi-agency unified command here have made significant accomplishments in the assessment, investigation and oversight of the environmental cleanup efforts since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita struck southeast Louisiana.

Unified command agencies, along with their local, state and federal partners, have recovered about seven million pounds of hazardous material, disposed of eight million tons of debris and recovered four million gallons of oil.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency, under the Presidential natural disaster declaration, activated emergency environmental resources to address hazardous materials and oil spill issues. This multi-agency effort, organized under the National Response Plan, comprises the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Coast Guard. The operations are based at a closed Louisiana Technical College facility here.

“The federal environmental agencies with their state and local agency partners have done a remarkable job responding to environmental problems created by the hurricanes,” said Deborah Dietrich, chair of EPA’s National Response Team. “But even more post-hurricane work is needed in 2006.”

“We have effectively managed the disposal of eight million of the 22 million tons of debris generated by the hurricanes,” said Chuck Brown, LDEQ assistant secretary. “As we continue our cleanup efforts in 2006, our partners are committed to properly disposing of each waste stream in the most efficient and environmentally sound manner.”

The Coast Guard, along with its agency partners, responded immediately following the hurricane to six major and three medium spills totaling about eight million gallons of oil. The spills all resulted from storm damage to facilities.

Since then, the Coast Guard has recovered about four million gallons of oil. The remaining oil was naturally dispersed, evaporated or burned off in a process known as in-situ burning.

In addition, pollution investigation teams responded to more than 100 spill reports.

Residual oil cleanup efforts continue at the following facilities: Sundown East in Potash, La.; Bass Enterprises Production Company Cox Bay facility at mile marker 35 on the Mississippi River; and Bass Enterprises Production Company at mile marker 36 in Pointe a la Hache, La.

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“Our Coast Guard men and women, agency partners and countless other environmental response personnel, have done an extraordinary job under very difficult circumstances. Their passion and dedication to this cleanup effort is certainly recognized by many, and their commitment will carry them through the monumental task of clean up, restoration and future protection of the Gulf Coast environment,” Capt. Frank Paskewich, commanding officer of Coast Guard Sector New Orleans, said.

Since September 2005, Unified Command staff and contractors have collected waste, performed facility inspections and/or conducted sampling in Beauregard, Jefferson Davis, Calcasieu, Cameron, Acadia, Lafayette, Vermilion, Iberia, St. Mary, St. Martin, Assumption, St. James, St. Charles, Terrebonne, LaFourche, St. Tammany, Orleans, Jefferson, Plaquemines, and St. Bernard Parishes. Efforts required approximately 1.2 million work hours. Results include:

### *Collected*

- More than 1.3 million containerized hazardous materials (cleaners, pesticides, paints and batteries), resulting in waste disposal exceeding 6.6 million pounds.
- More than 230,000 damaged white goods (refrigerators, freezers, washers, dryers, water heaters, air conditioners, stoves, ovens, microwave ovens and dishwashers). Freon extracted from refrigerators and air conditioners was sent to local vendors for recycling.
- Nearly 43,000 damaged electronic goods (televisions, computers and audio equipment).

### *Sampled and Assessed*

- More than 3,400 samples of water, soil and air collected.
- About 75 school inspections (both public and parochial).
- 1,500 emergency assessments of potential chemical releases.

In addition, more than 1.6 million flyers were distributed to residents of southern Louisiana, providing information about drinking water, household hazardous waste, white goods, mold and other potential environmental health hazards.

For more information about the combined response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, go to <http://www.epa.gov/katrina/>, <http://www.deq.louisiana.gov/>, or <http://www.uscgstormwatch.com/go/site/1008/>. Please contact the National Response Center at 800-424-8802 to report any oil or chemical spills.

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